

SELF-ADVOCACY

ACTIVITIES 1-9

Goal: You will understand your learning strengths, disability, and related accommodations. You will be a skilled advocate for yourself.

Objective -- You will:

- **Identify** your learning style and strategies that help you learn in Activity 1.
- **Learn** about your disability and its impact on school success in Activities 2 and 3.
- **Identify** appropriate accommodations in Activities 2, 4, and 5.
- **Learn** about disability documentation and how it supports specific accommodations in Activity 2.
- **Learn** about self-advocacy and practice it at school in Activities 6-9.

Students with disabilities must know themselves well and be able to talk about what they need to be successful in school. This is called self-advocacy. Because this is so important and because the skills and knowledge take time to develop, we have made self-knowledge and advocacy the focus of the first Post-ITT activities. These nine activities cover just the basics. Once you have learned about your disability and gained confidence talking with others about your learning needs, practice what you have learned in these lessons. With this practice you will become a skilled advocate for yourself. Your teacher has access to other in-depth lessons on self-advocacy. Ask for additional help, as you need it.

Some of the activities may call on you to do things for which you require an accommodation. For those with writing disabilities, a tape recorder will be indispensable when you go to interview, and voice recognition software can help you with your reports. Individuals with reading disabilities may benefit from human or electronic readers. If you are deaf, talk with your teacher about arranging for an interpreter on activities where you will need this accommodation. Whether you need assistive technology or human assistance, don't let your need for accommodation stand in your way.

ACTIVITY 1

Identify your preferred learning style or preference and related learning strategies.

VOCABULARY

- learning style/preference
- learning strategies

We all prefer to learn in different ways. It can help to understand your learning preferences and to adjust your approach to studying so that you rely on your learning strengths. Go to the web site <http://www.vark-learn.com>* to complete a questionnaire that will help you identify your learning preference. It will also suggest learning strategies based on that preference that will help you to study in a productive manner.



- Read the Introduction.
- Complete the Questionnaire.

Your scores will be calculated and reported to you immediately. You will have a numerical rating in the following four categories:

- Visual
- Aural
- Read/Write
- Kinesthetic

You will receive a statement of your learning preferences based on your answers. The report will give you links to study skill “Helpsheets”. Read and then print this information before continuing with the activity. If you have a high score in several learning preferences, read and print these as well.



Meet with a teacher or school counselor and discuss your results. Identify study strategies that you think may be helpful and develop a plan to experiment with strategies that are new to you. You may be interested in other learning style/preference questionnaires. Ask your teachers about other resources that are listed in the Teacher Manual.

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ACTIVITY 2

Learn about your disability and how it affects your learning in the classroom.

VOCABULARY

- disability services
- academic accommodation
- documentation
- self-advocate

Understanding your disability and how it impacts your learning will help you be a successful college student. When you request services from an office of disability services, you will have to describe your disability and what your needs are in the classroom. This is called self-advocacy. One way to understand your disability and how it affects your learning is by reviewing the professional documentation of your disability. This documentation may be provided by a medical doctor or through testing done by a school psychologist.



Make an appointment with your doctor if you have medical reports describing your disability, or with the school psychologist if testing related to your disability was conducted at school. At the time you schedule this appointment, let the doctor or school psychologist know that you would like to review the documentation of your disability at this meeting. You may also want to invite a parent or family member. It might be a good idea to send these professionals a letter that explains that you want to discuss your disability and its impact on your learning in school. See the sample letter in Activity 2 worksheet on the Post-ITT Website.*

At the meeting, have a discussion about your disability and ask the following important questions:

- What is my disability? Please describe it in terms I can understand.
- In what specific ways does it affect how I learn?
- What are my learning strengths? (How do I learn best?)
- Which academic accommodations are supported by my documentation?
- What was the date of the last diagnosis of my disability?

Be sure to take notes during this discussion and do not leave the meeting until you understand the answers to the above questions. If the language that is used during this meeting is confusing, ASK to have it explained in terms you will understand. Take a copy of these questions with you as a reminder. A sample outline of questions is provided on the Post-ITT Website (Activity 2 worksheet*).



After the meeting, organize your notes into an outline or paragraph.
Include the answers to the above questions.



Review the information with your special education teacher or family member.

*Go to the **Post-ITT Website**, Click **Guidance Activities**, select **Forms** and choose **Activity 2 worksheets**.

ACTIVITY 3

Increase your understanding of your disability and how it affects your learning in the classroom.

VOCABULARY

- disability services

Understanding your disability and how it impacts your learning will help you be a successful college student. When you request assistance from disability services, you may have to describe your disability and what your needs are in the classroom.



Use the Internet to find out information about your disability. You may begin by visiting the Post-ITT Website. Once you are on the Post-ITT home page, select *Resources*. There are several websites that may be of help to you.

Use a search engine to find at least one other resource that gives information on your disability. Yahoo.com, Excite.com, Google.com, and Altavista.com are commonly used search engines.



Develop a “fact sheet” on your disability. List at least ten facts.



Discuss what you have learned with your special education teacher, school guidance counselor, or family member.

ACTIVITY 4

Increase your understanding of academic accommodations and how they can help you work around your limitations in school.

VOCABULARY

- academic accommodations
- documentation
- otherwise qualified
- self-advocate

You may have learned about accommodations in Activity 2 when you met with a professional to review the documentation of your disability. That review may have included a discussion on the strategies or accommodations that your documentation supports. If you completed Activity 2, review the information on accommodations in your outline or paragraph before you continue.



Use the Glossary to find the definition for “academic accommodation”. Write the definition in your own words.

Using the Post-ITT Website, select a college of interest and research accommodations that are available. Some colleges may not post this information. If you do not find the information, call the disability services office.

For most colleges listed, you will find information about accommodations on these web pages. Be aware that you will not be eligible for all of these accommodations. Your disability documentation should indicate which ones you are qualified to receive.

Read the information on these accommodations.



Before you leave this site, make a list of all the accommodations that may help you. Indicate by underlining which accommodations you already use in your high school classes.



Discuss your list of accommodations with a special education teacher, parent, or guidance counselor. Circle the accommodations your documentation supports.

Discuss accommodations that might be beneficial but are not yet supported by documentation.

ACTIVITY 5

With the help of a teacher or counselor, experience using accommodations that are new to you and that are supported by your documentation.

Prerequisite: Completion of Activity 2 and/or Activity 4.



Review the information on academic accommodations that you have in your outline or paragraph from Activity 2 and the list of accommodations that you developed in Activity 4.

Select one accommodation (supported by your documentation) that you would like to experience in at least one of your high school classes.



Ask your special education teacher or guidance counselor to help you to make arrangements for the accommodation in at least one of your classes.



After you have had opportunities to use this accommodation several times, discuss the following questions/statements with your special education teacher or school guidance counselor.

- Was the accommodation helpful?
- If yes, how did the accommodation help you to work around one or more of your limitations?
- Although you may have done assignments in a different way by using the accommodation, did you learn the same information as the other students in the class?
- What did your teacher need to do to provide this accommodation?
- What did your teacher say about providing this accommodation?
- Identify other classes where this accommodation could be helpful.



Repeat this activity for additional accommodations on your list that are new to you and that are supported by your documentation.

ACTIVITY 6

Prepare yourself to participate in your next IEP meeting.

VOCABULARY

- IEP meeting

Before your next Individual Educational Plan (IEP) meeting*, schedule to meet with a special education teacher. Request s/he bring the report from your last IEP meeting.



At the meeting, discuss the following items with this teacher. Ask questions until you have a clear understanding of each item on the list. Be sure to take notes.

- What is the purpose of the IEP meeting?
- Who will be there?
- What is each person's role at the meeting?
- Review together the report from your last IEP meeting.
- Identify the goals listed on the IEP document and discuss the progress you have made on each goal.
- Practice summarizing your progress on the goals.
- Establish new goals and practice them.
- Discuss appropriate accommodations you will need to be successful in class.



Follow-up this meeting by discussing with a family member your understanding of an IEP meeting. Practice stating:

- The progress you have made on the goals listed in your last IEP
- Your new goals for the upcoming meeting
- The academic accommodations you will need to be successful

*Many students with disabilities don't have an IEP committee. Goal setting is still important. Discuss alternatives to Activities 6 and 7 with your guidance counselor.

ACTIVITY 7

Participate in your IEP meeting.

Prerequisite: Completion of Activity 6, which prepares you to participate in your IEP meeting.



Review the following activities with your special education teacher before your next IEP meeting. Decide what you will do at the meeting.

Before the meeting:

- Make a list of the people to invite to your IEP meeting.
- Invite each person on this list.

At the meeting:

- Introduce each person at the meeting.
- Summarize your past goals and accomplishments.
- State your new goals.
- State the appropriate accommodations you will need to be successful in class.
- Ask for ideas and feedback from other members.
- Ask for the support and help that you will need to accomplish your goals.
- Ask questions if you don't understand or would like more information.



After your IEP meeting, draft an action plan that you will follow to accomplish the goals established in the meeting.



Meet with your special education teacher to review and polish your action plan.



Repeat this activity for each IEP meeting.

ACTIVITY 8

Prepare to be a self-advocate for accommodations in the classroom.

VOCABULARY

- self-advocate

Prerequisite: Completion of Activities 1 - 4.

In Activities 1-3 you learned about your strengths and limitations. With the help of a teacher you have experienced accommodations and their effects. In the following two activities you will advocate for your own accommodations.



Write the answers to the following questions and statements. You may want to review information from the activities indicated below.

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| • What is your disability? | Activities 2 & 3 |
| • Describe how your disability affects how you learn. | Activities 2 & 3 |
| • Describe how you learn best. | Activities 1 |
| • What accommodations are supported by your documentation? | Activities 1 & 4 |

Record answers to these 4 questions on the Activity 8 worksheet* which can be found on the Post-ITT Website.

Practice discussing this information with a parent and then with a special education teacher or guidance counselor.

Working with your special education teacher or school guidance counselor, make any necessary changes that will make the information clear, understandable, and reasonable.

Develop a presentation for your teachers and practice sharing this information with your parent, special education teacher, or guidance counselor.

*Go to the **Post-ITT Website**, click **Guidance Activities**, select **Forms** and choose **Activity 8 worksheet**.

ACTIVITY 9

Practice being a self-advocate by requesting accommodations in your classes.

VOCABULARY

- self-advocate

Prerequisite: Completion of Activities 1-4 and Activity 8.



Identify a class in which you will need to use accommodations. Discuss with a special education teacher or counselor which accommodations would help you learn in this class. Keep in mind that in order to receive accommodations, they must be supported by written documentation.

Using the presentation you developed in Activity 8, practice identifying yourself to the teacher of this class. Be sure to include a statement naming your disability, how it affects your ability to learn, how you learn best, and the accommodations you will need to help you learn or demonstrate what you know.

Arrange for a brief meeting with the teacher of the class that you identified. Make your presentation to this teacher and address any questions s/he may have.



Return to a special education teacher and report on your experience. Discuss what went well and what you will do differently the next time you advocate for accommodations.



Repeat this activity for all the classes where you believe accommodations are reasonable and necessary.